



State Public Charter School Commission 2013 Recommendation Report

Charter Application for
iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Submitted by
iLEAD Schools

Evaluation Team
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Introduction

In 2012, the Hawaii State Legislature passed Act 130, replacing the state’s previous charter school law, Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”) Chapter 302B, with our new law, codified as HRS Chapter 302D. Act 130 instituted a rigorous, transparent accountability system that at the same time honors the autonomy and local decision-making of Hawaii’s charter schools. The law created the State Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”), assigned it statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority, and directed it to enter into State Public Charter School Contracts (“Charter Contract”) with every existing charter school and every newly approved charter school applicant.

The 2013 Request for Applications and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous, thorough, transparent, and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that charter school operators possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies. Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate high levels of expertise in the areas of education, school finance, administration, and management as well as high expectations for excellence in professional standards and student achievement.

Evaluation Process

The Commission has worked with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (“NACSA”) to develop the new charter school application evaluation process. NACSA provided its advice and expertise in creating standardized evaluation forms, providing evaluator training, and assisting with the assembly of the evaluation teams to help ensure that the Commission implements the national best practices, policies, and standards needed to authorize high-performing charter schools. The highlights of the process are as follows:

Proposal Evaluation. The evaluation teams conducted individual and group assessments of completed applications. The Commission’s Operations staff conducted a completeness check to ensure evaluation teams only reviewed complete submissions.

Request for Clarification. After the initial review, the evaluation teams identified any areas of the application that required clarification. Applicants had the opportunity to respond to the evaluation teams’ Request for Clarification in writing to address these issues.

External Financial Review. An external review by Charter School Business Management Inc. was conducted to answer several critical questions relating to the financial information submitted by applicants. Evaluation teams could consider these reviews when drafting their evaluation.

Capacity Interview. After reviewing each response to the Request for Clarification, the evaluation teams conducted an in-person or virtual assessment of the applicant’s capacity.

Consensus Judgment. The evaluation teams came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the application for approval or denial.

The duty of the evaluation teams is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits. The Commission’s Operations staff is charged with reviewing this recommendation report, the testimony at public hearings, and other information obtained during the application process in making their final recommendation to the Commission. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the Commissioners.

Report Contents

This Recommendation Report includes the following:

Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

Recommendation

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

Evaluation

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant to execute the plan as presented:

1. Academic Plan
2. Organizational Plan
3. Financial Plan
4. Evidence of Capacity

Rating Characteristics

Rating	Characteristics
Meets the Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.
Does Not Meet the Standard	The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps, lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Falls Far Below the Standard	The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

Proposal Overview

Proposed School Name

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Applicant Name

iLEAD Schools

Mission and Vision

Mission: iLEAD Kauai Charter School inspires lifelong learners with the skills to lead in the 21st Century. We empower students to become conscientious, responsible leaders and citizens of the world. Our programs cultivate creative thinking, by offering individualized instruction, active learning methods and opportunities for self-directed educational experiences.

Vision: The vision for iLEAD Kauai is that all students develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed by mastering academic standards and cultivating a deep understanding of subject matter. Students will have a heightened awareness of endless possibilities for the future, and a sense of how to navigate through those possibilities by asking the right questions, collaborating, and communicating effectively by asking the right questions and especially when confronted with the status quo.

Geographical Area

Central Kauai and/or East Kauai

Enrollment Summary

Grade Level	Number of Students					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Capacity
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
K	50	50	50	50	50	50
1	50	50	50	50	50	50
2	25	50	50	50	50	50
3	25	25	50	50	50	50
4	25	25	50	50	50	50
5	0	25	25	50	50	50
6	0	0	25	50	50	50
7	25	25	25	25	50	50
8	0	25	25	25	25	50
9	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	200	275	350	400	425	450

Executive Summary

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Recommendation

Deny

Summary Analysis

The team recommends that the application for iLEAD Kauai Charter School (“iLEAD Kauai”) be denied. The applicant did not meet standards in any of the four areas.

A theme throughout the application was an apparent lack of understanding of Hawaii’s unique education environment. iLEAD Schools Development (“iLEAD Development”), the applicant and intended charter management organization (“CMO”), currently manages two charter schools in California, and the application often used California examples, but failed to explain how the California model would be appropriately adapted to Hawaii. For example, the academic plan included special education terms and positions used in California. In the organization plan, the applicant did not demonstrate an understanding that Hawaii charter schools are not private nonprofit organizations but are instead state agencies. Also, the applicant glossed over the challenges it may face in negotiating supplements to the collective bargaining agreement. The financial plan also showed that the applicant did not do due diligence regarding Hawaii’s economy when preparing the budget.

The aforementioned issues become more problematic when factoring in the fact that iLEAD Development would help operate the school from its California base, leading to questions of whether the applicant has the local capacity needed to start a new school. There are also questions regarding the relationship between the CMO to the local governing board.

Additionally, the academic performance of the two existing iLEAD Development in California is not strong, prompting questions as to whether the CMO is prepared to open a new school in another state.

The applicant does demonstrate a deep understanding of project-based learning and exhibits a sophisticated level of curriculum design. Their holistic focus on students and use of brain-based research is compelling. Finally, members of iLEAD Development demonstrate strong school leadership and management skills.

Summary of Section Ratings

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weakness in others.

Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.

Academic Plan

Does Not Meet the Standard

Financial Plan

Does Not Meet the Standard

Organizational Plan

Does Not Meet the Standard

Evidence of Capacity

Does Not Meet the Standard

Academic Plan

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary

The proposed school has a project-based learning curriculum. It will also develop leadership skills and social and emotional competence by practicing the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. The school's program focuses on college and career readiness with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and 21st-century technological literacy.

Classes are expected to have an average of 25 students in multi-aged classroom; for example, grades may be grouped as K/1 and 2/3.

iLEAD Kauai employs constructivist theory methods based on research about how people learn. Constructive teaching is based on the belief that students learn best through exploration and active learning. The iLEAD model draws influence from research on brain-based instruction, and the applicant includes information about the research in the application.

iLEAD Kauai will work with a charter management organization called iLEAD Development, which currently manages two charter schools in California. The application includes many references to California; for example, the sample contract between the CMO and school is for a California charter school, and many of the policies also reference California law.

Analysis

The academic plan does not meet the standard for approval. The plan demonstrates a lack of understanding about Kauai. Although some aspects of the curriculum/instructional components appear strong, the applicant was unable to articulate the how its instructional materials aligned with Common Core. There are also concerns regarding the lack of demonstrated academic success of the other two schools managed by the CMO and the qualifications and capacity of the iLEAD Kauai's proposed school leader.

The applicant did not demonstrate a strong understanding of Kauai. The application continually refers (both implicitly and explicitly) to California; for example, the special education section of the plan is based on California law, and the community section included a Parent University in Spanish, with no explanation of its relevancy to Hawaii. While some adjustments to Hawaii might be minor (discipline policy, for example), others are more complicated (such as special education and English Language Learners). Also, the applicant did not fully acknowledge the fact that Hawaii charters are state agencies, not nonprofit organizations, as they are in California.

Additionally, continual references to California raise important questions about the ability and willingness of the applicant to adapt their model to Hawaii. These issues are more troubling because the CMO has not demonstrated academic success with its only two charters schools, which are both located in Southern California.

iLEAD Development's interest in Kauai stems largely from some personal connections to Kauai and to the proposed school leader. Personal connections aside, however, it is unclear why the applicant chose Deena Moraes as its proposed school leader. Her primary qualifications seem to be communication skills and local ties, but she lacks many essential qualities, including experience with administration,

curriculum and assessment, performance management, and overall instructional leadership. Although members of iLEAD Development appear to have the skills, experience, and capacity needed to implement the proposed program, they are based in California. This makes it even more critical for the proposed school to have a highly-capable leader on location.

Additionally, the proposed leader did not do any research about CMOs when deciding to work with iLEAD Development. There are many such organizations from which to choose and Ms. Moraes did not convincingly explain why iLEAD Development would be a better choice for Kauai than other CMOs.

Organizational Plan

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary

The iLEAD Kauai governing board was not identified at the time of the application. The applicant stated that the board would be installed within weeks of charter approval and that a vetting process would be used for members to ensure there are no real or perceived conflicts of interest. The applicant plans to recruit members with the skills and experiences needed to provide rigorous academic, operational, and financial oversight. The CMO will provide guidance and support for the board by helping it create bylaws and to assume its new duties. The intent is for iLEAD Development to continue an ongoing relationship with the iLEAD Kauai's governing board. iLEAD Development is based in California. It operates two charter schools in California and has experience in staffing, professional development, performance management, general operations, and facilities management.

The applicant stated that any deviations from the collective bargaining agreement would be negotiated in a supplemental agreement.

The board will use training and evaluation to continuously develop its efficacy. This will include input from school leadership and management, along with board members' self-assessments.

Analysis

The organization plan does not meet the standard for approval. While the CMO exhibits some strength in this area, there are significant concerns regarding the lack of understanding regarding Hawaii's unique environment, particularly with regards to collective bargaining. There are also questions regarding the independence of the proposed school's governing board.

Many of the materials submitted related to California, not Hawaii. Subsequently, the applicant suggested that these documents were "examples." However, these "examples" contain very little actual content on which to evaluate the application. Furthermore, while some changes may not be too difficult to make, the application made little, if any, note of the need for such changes to adapt material to Hawaii.

Also, some adjustments from California to Hawaii are likely to be far more difficult than the applicant assumes. For example, the applicant did not have a clear plan in place for adapting its model to Hawaii's unionized environment and underestimated potential challenges in negotiating needed supplemental agreements. iLEAD Development's other two charter schools in California are not unionized.

There also is a potentially troubling relationship between the CMO and governing board. Outside research by the Evaluation Team revealed that at other iLEAD Development schools, members of iLEAD Development sit on the school's governing board. Even though Hawaii law does not currently prohibit this arrangement, there are concerns regarding the independence of the governing board. During the interview, the applicant indicated a willingness to have CMO members serve as advisers rather than school governing board members, if needed. Still, the CMO intended to provide the board with a tool to evaluate the CMO, which begs questions of whether the governing board would have the autonomy and capacity needed to end the relationship with the CMO, if warranted.

Financial Plan

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary

iLead Kauai will operate under the guidance and oversight of iLead Development, its CMO. The school director, in collaboration with facilitators and the school board, will develop a budget for the upcoming school year. The proposed budget is submitted to the school board for review and approval. The school board develops policies to clearly articulate procedures for expenditures, reimbursements, and contracting services for audits, payroll, etc. Budget reports are updated and shared at regularly scheduled board meetings.

Analysis

The financial plan does not meet the standard for approval. While the CMO has the capacity to implement a sound financial plan, the plan appears to have some incorrect assumptions that. For example, the applicant overestimated operating expenses relating to facilities. The applicant acknowledged that they estimated the cost of utilities based on California rates, clearly exemplifying not having due diligence when preparing the budget to reflect Hawaii's economy.

The applicant also seemed to underestimate certain costs during the start-up year, preventing the review team and external financial review from determining the future financial outlook of the proposed school. The applicant has not identified private or government funding during the initial year, and there are concerns that the proposed school would enter into year one with a deficit. Should the proposed school not reach projected enrollment, there is significant risk that they would be in position of not being able to cover operational expenses.

Evidence of Capacity

iLEAD Kauai Charter School

Rating

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary

Key members of the applicant team include Dawn Evenson, Amber Raskin, and Deena Fontana Moraes. Dawn Evenson is the Executive Director of Education of iLEAD Development and has twenty-five years' experience in education, with expertise in K-8 curriculum, instruction, assessment, school leadership and governance. Amber Raskin is Executive Director of Business Development and Operations of iLEAD Development and has experience in school governance and business management. Deena Fontana Moraes is the proposed school leader. Ms. Moraes grew up on Kauai and has lived in Brazil for the past five years. She is currently an elementary teacher at Pan American School of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil and is pursuing a Master's in Educational Administration with the University of West Florida.

Analysis

The capacity of the applicant does not meet the standard for approval. In the application and in the interview, the applicant did not identify and demonstrate Ms. Moraes' capacity in the areas of school leadership, administration, governance, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and performance management. Ms. Moraes explained in the interview that she was "new to all of this" and demonstrated a clear lack of understanding of the qualifications and skills needed to run a school. Prior to the opening of iLEAD Kauai, Ms. Moraes plans to complete a year-long residency at an iLEAD school in California; it is unclear who will be able to manage start-up locally, if the application was approved.

Ms. Evenson and Ms. Raskin demonstrate evidence of their school leadership and management qualifications, but the school leadership seems to be lacking in areas of organizational and financial capacity, as they fail to demonstrate capacity to start and manage a school in this state and seem to have underestimated the challenges of starting and managing a school remotely. In many areas, the applicant's use of California examples within the application showed a lack of initiative and failure to demonstrate the applicant's capacity to successfully replicate its model in Hawaii. At times, the application ignored or glossed over important considerations that would impact the school, such as the collective bargaining agreement and the fact that Hawaii charter schools are not nonprofit organizations but state agencies.

Evaluator Biographies

Stephanie Klupinski

Ms. Klupinski is the Commission's Organizational Performance Manager. She previously worked for the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools as Vice President of Legal and Legislative Affairs. She is an accomplished author with numerous education policy publications and has been a speaker at several conferences on charter schools and charter school law. She is also a Teach for America alumnus and holds a Juris Doctorate and a Master of Public Policy.

Kathy Olsen

Ms. Olsen is currently a charter school facilities financing consultant for clients such as KIPP and the Walton Family Foundation. She has extensive experience in charter school facilities financing, including her prior position as the Director of the Educational Facilities Financing Center where she oversaw the origination of \$100 million in facilities financing for 40 charter schools. She has co-authored and edited several publications on charter school financing and was a founding member and is vice chair of the Coney Island Preparatory Public Charter School. She holds a Master of Government Administration from the University of Pennsylvania, Fels Center of Government.

Jeff Poentis

Mr. Poentis is the Commission's Financial Performance Specialist. He has extensive accounting experience and is a Certified Public Accountant with over 18 years of experience in both the private and public sectors. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Kirsten Rogers

Ms. Rogers is the Commission's Academic Performance Specialist. She has experience as a middle school teacher at both a charter school in Tennessee and at Wheeler Intermediate, a DOE school in Hawaii. She is a Teach for America alumnus, a former corps member advisor, and former content community leader for the organization. She also holds a Master of Education in Teaching from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Stephanie Shipton

Ms. Shipton is currently an Institutional Analyst at the Hawaii Department of Education in the Office of Strategic Reform. She co-authored Hawaii's ESEA Flexibility application and is currently working on a number of projects, including the Comprehensive Student Support System, implementation of Common Core State Standards, and STEM education. She has worked as a policy analyst with the National Governors Association where she worked on education policy relating to subjects like state strategies to support high quality charter schools and supporting learning outside of the school day. She has researched and written a number of education policy publications, case studies, and governor's guides and holds a Master of Political Science degree.

Charter School Business Management Inc. (External Financial Review)

CSBM is a firm experienced and focused on financial and organizational consultancy for charter schools. It is based in New York and has extensive nationwide charter school experience.